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THE
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St. Augustine on Baptism*

A

Augustine was the child of a mixed marriage. His father was a pagan till near the end of his life, but his mother was a devout Christian and her piety ruled in the home. In infancy Augustine was "signed with the Cross and seasoned with Christ's salt," becoming thus formally a catechumen; but he was not baptised. His mother shared the common view that baptism was best deferred till after the tempestuous period of adolescence because the guilt of post-baptismal sins was greater and more deadly than that of sins committed before baptism. Doubtless she would not have gone so far as to say as many did, "Let him do what he will; he is not yet baptised,"— an unhappy inference too easily drawn from the Church's teaching about baptism. Deferment of baptism was still normal and in Augustine's case had nothing to do with the paganism of his father. Ambrose and Gregory Nazianzen, both children of Christian parents, were not baptised in infancy. Gregory's father was a bishop, yet the son tells us how, when storm-tossed at sea, fear made him for the first time desire baptism.

Fear had something to do with Augustine's first desire for baptism too. As a young school boy he fell dangerously ill and, fearing a speedy death, clamoured for baptism. But as he suddenly recovered his baptism was postponed. Reflecting on this later he asks (*Confessions* I xi) was it for his good that his cleansing was delayed? And he concludes that it would have been better to have been "healed" early. It might have led to greater moral earnestness on his own part, and to greater care on the part of his mother, so that with God's protection his soul's salvation effected in baptism might have remained a secure possession. A curiously brief treatment of an obviously important point.

Throughout his school and university life, therefore, Augustine remained nominally a Christian catechumen, until in his 19th year he became an Auditor of the

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Manichees and learned from them to deride, among other Christian doctrines and practices, that of baptism. Like the older Gnostics the Manichees taught that water baptism did nobody any good. How far he had passed from the naive piety of his boyhood appears from a story told in *Confessions* IV iv. Augustine had returned to his native Tagaste to teach "grammar" and renewed a friendship with an old acquaintance of his school days, common literary pursuits being the bond. The young man, like Augustine himself, had been brought up as a nominal catechumen. Now Augustine got him interested in his Manichee ideas and caused him to wander far from the true faith. Within a year the youth became sick and his life was despaired of. As he lay unconscious his parents had him baptised. He rallied, and as soon as he could speak his closest friend was admitted to his bedside. The conversation turned to the baptism he had received while unconscious, and Augustine was for making fun of it. To his pained surprise his friend was horrified and bade him cease such talk if their friendship was to continue. Unhappily the young man had a relapse and died, and there was no opportunity of renewing the conversation as Augustine had intended (evidently in order to shake his friend's absurd notion). In a state of acute depression owing to the loss of his friend, Augustine left Tagaste for Carthage and later went on to Rome. There he himself fell dangerously ill and feared he was going to die, but this time he did not even desire baptism. He was then in the hands of Manichee friends who tended him through his illness. He was no longer an enthusiastic sharer of their views, but neither had he returned to faith in the Christian remedies for sin and the fear of death.

Augustine's conversion in Milan, it has been said, was to Neoplatonism rather than to the Gospel, I should prefer to say, to the life of Christian philosophy rather than to that of the ordinary baptised believer, owing perhaps as much to Victorinus the Platonist as to Ambrose. Possibly insight into his special situation prompted Simplician to tell at length the story of Victorinus who claimed to have reached Christian faith by a purely philosophical path and hesitated to seek membership of the Church by baptism. Finally he did so and, refusing the privilege of private initiation, went through the whole ceremony in Church in face of the common folk there, and so "was made a Christian." At all events though shrinking from publicity and withdrawing from Milan for some months, Augustine

returned at the beginning of Lent, 387, to give in his name, went through the required disciplines (*De Fide et Operibus* 1) and was baptised on Easter Day. In the *Confessions* he refers briefly to the experience. "We were baptised, and anxiety about our past life was banished. How sweet to dwell on the depths of the Divine plan for man's salvation; how affecting the hymns and canticles of the Church."

During his period of philosophic retirement Augustine had no occasion to reflect on baptism. But after his ordination in 391 his writings as Presbyter and Bishop are full of references to it. These are most highly concentrated in the anti-Donatist and anti-Pelagian works, but they are to be found almost everywhere showing the importance he attached to this *magnum sacramentum fidei* by which people *fiunt Christiani.* Of course the Church had always recognised the crucial importance of baptism for the spiritual life and destiny of individuals, and had underlined it by making the act of baptism the climax not only of a period of special instruction, but also of an elaborate series of impressive symbolic rites. It may well be that the word baptism (or its equivalents, *lavacrum, aqua, unda,* etc.) should be understood as signifying the whole complex of initiatory rites, and not merely water baptism. At any rate Augustine takes the Pelagian Julian to task for irreverence in asking how the mere pouring of water on anyone *(quicquid perfunditur)* should make all the difference between salvation and damnation. *Baptizari* is a technical term for the Christian sacrament as a whole, not to be replaced by a minimising and contemptuous synonym (*Contra Julianum* VI 26). Like Tertullian Augustine stresses the simplicity of the Christian sacraments in contrast to those of the Jews. Christ's yoke is easy, "hence He bound the society of His New People together with sacraments few in number, most easy in observance and of most excellent significance, such as baptism consecrated in the name of the Trinity" (*Epist.* 54 i). But Christian initiation has an elaboration consonant with its importance, insufflation, exorcism, interrogation and response, *traditio et redditio symboli,* to all of which Augustine refers from time to time but without laying stress on them. His emphasis always is on doctrine rather than on rite.

In addition to its importance for the individual there is perhaps another reason why in Augustine's time baptism should have become the subject of much discussion and

controversy. Christianity was exchanging its earlier role of missionary faith for that of Volksreligion; the ancient world was being "baptised into Christ." Baptism was still normally "Believers' baptism," but already infant baptism was common, soon to be practically universal. This development, first indicated by Tertullian's protest, was well under way in Cyprian's time and had gone further during the 4th century. Thus it was to be expected that much attention should be given to baptism and that it should raise new problems theological, ecclesiastical and practical. One could wish that more thought had been given to what looks like an obvious problem, — how "formularies composed for adults, and ceremonies which have their significance only where persons of riper years are concerned" could with no more than "considerable abridgment" be applied in the case of infants. (Duchesne — *Christian Worship* p. 295 and note). Even the Pelagian controversy which had much to do with infant baptism did not raise this particular question. In this respect Pelagius claimed to be perfectly orthodox.

B

It will be worth while in the first place to consider what Augustine actually taught his own people. Here the primary source will be naturally the Sermons.

1. Baptism is absolutely indispensable for salvation, but that hardly needed to be insisted on for none denied it. Punic-speaking Christians have no other name for it than a word meaning *salus*. Still, there may have been some doubters, for in *Epist.* 265:3 (cp. *Epist.* 44:10) Augustine is ready to prove that the Apostles were baptised with the baptism of Christ, *pace* Tertullian, "lest men use their example as authority for despising baptism." Again (*In Joann. Ev.* XIII 6) he explains that Jesus was baptised by John like other men, the Lord by the servant, not to wash away His own sins but to give an example of humility, so that none should be able to say — "I have prudence or education, or the patience of a martyr, or chastity, virtues far exceeding those expected of ordinary believers, Why then should I be baptised?" Even penitence for sin is insufficient without baptism. The only valid substitute is the baptism of blood, martyrdom.

2. But Augustine did have to exhort his people not to delay baptism. Each year as Easter-tide approached, pre-eminently the time for baptism, he was wont to exhort those who were content to remain catechumens to hand in

their names as *competentes*, holding before them the benefits of baptism, negative and positive. (a) All past sins, original and voluntary, are forgiven. "All sins are blotted out in the sacrament of baptism. Absolutely all, — words deeds thoughts, — all are blotted out." (*Serm.* 131:6, 152:3). (b) Admission to the Eucharist, and thereby possession of the full Christian experience, is reserved for the baptised. This is somewhat oddly put (*Serm.* 132:1) "Lo it is the Easter season. Give in your name for baptism. If the festival does not excite you, let very curiosity induce you to learn what the sentence means, He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me and I in him." Augustine does not commonly appeal to the fear-motive, though he knows it is widely operative. He tells how the Numidian town of Sitifis was once badly shaken by an earthquake so that the people lived in the fields for five days and about 2000 persons were baptised. "God uses terrors to drive men to amend their lives because He does not wish to find anyone to condemn." Elsewhere he tells us that barbarian incursions multiplied demands for baptism. In general, "rarely it happens that anyone comes wishing to be made a Christian who is not driven by some fear of God or is desirous of avoiding some evil." This is a wrong motive and can only lead to a fictitious Christianity. "But often the right motive can be induced and the reality of religion come through the ministry of the Catechist." (*De Cateches. Rud.* 9).

3. In the Sermons the call to give in names for baptism is not accompanied by any cautions as to the conditions under which a candidate will be accepted. As in the evangelical call to conversion stress is laid on the grace of God *gratis data* without any merit on the part of the baptisand. But there were in fact conditions as to both faith and life. *Competentes* had to undergo serious and repeated scrutinies as to their motives and conduct. Thorough instruction in the faith was given leading up to the *traditio symboli* as a solemn secret. They had to submit to a degree of ascetic discipline — fasting, abstinence from intercourse with their wives — as well as to prescribed times of prayer and acts of penitence. In a long sermon on Penitence (*Serm.* 351) Augustine says there are three kinds of penitence and lays stress on penitence before baptism, from which only infants are excused because, lacking free choice, they cannot have sins to repent of. All bishops may not have been equally strict. It seems to have been necessary to combat the opinion that at all events before

baptism all that was required was instruction in the faith, that instruction in Christian living should come after baptism and that penitence was a purely post-baptismal exercise (*De Fide et Operibus* 1ff). Augustine is not indeed a rigorist, but he would insist that certain open sins, e.g., adultery and concubinage, must be abandoned before he would accept anyone as a candidate for baptism. We may note a curious passage in *De Coniugiis Adulterinis* (1:28-35). To contract a second marriage while the former partner is still alive is adultery, and on no account can a person living in adultery be baptised, not even supposing a divorced Christian should marry a pagan who has promised on marriage to become a Christian. But a Christian catechumen who has in this sense been living in adultery may be baptised *in articulo mortis* on the assumption that he or she had intended to abandon that sin, which in any case will be forgiven and blotted out in baptism.

4. The chief reason why good people delayed their baptism was the old one that there was no assurance of a complete forgiveness of post-baptismal sins (though there was of course by this time a well-understood process of penance as we may call it for such sins). Augustine does not and cannot reject this idea, but meets the difficulty in another way. (a) "I know that all my past sins will be blotted out when I am baptised but I fear future sins." Augustine admits that of course the lusts of the flesh remain after baptism — the law of sin warring against the law of the mind. That weakness is part of the penalty entailed by the fall, and the penalty remains even though the guilt is remitted. But there is now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus, i.e., who by baptism are made members of Christ, sons of God, brethren of the Only Son. (b) "Israel did not arrive at the promised land immediately after crossing the Red Sea. They had to pass through the desert with its many temptations." Precisely. The crossing of the Red Sea is a type of baptism and the desert pilgrimage prefigures the Christian life. Augustine never wearies of urging this analogy. In a great and still moving sermon (*Serm.* 363) on Moses' song of triumph over the Egyptians he exhorts his hearers to rejoice in the similar triumph granted to those who are baptised and to undertake the desert journey strong in the strength of their Commander. As not one Egyptian was left to pursue and molest the Israelites, so not one sin is left to trouble the Christian. The new life will indeed be one of moral

conflict, but the Christian will be unimpeded for the fight, and the Saviour who has blotted out past sins will give His aid. Moreover there will be the advantage of the fellowship of the Church, especially the example of good Catholics. Again and again Augustine warns his *Infantes* to beware of bad Catholics even more than of pagans, Jews and heretics. It might appear that some of the sins which Tertullian declared to be unthinkable in the Christian community were now all too common there. In the sermons what is stressed, naturally enough, is not the doctrine of baptism, but the personal faith and Christian life of those who are to be or have been baptised. Nevertheless behind the practical exhortations there lies the traditional doctrine that in principle Baptism is a saving sacrament in the sense that, should death immediately follow, the eternal salvation of the baptised is certain. In *De Civ. Dei* 1:27 he argues that while it might seem reasonable "to exhort men to commit suicide as soon as they have been washed in the laver of regeneration and have received the forgiveness of all sin and so escape all future sin" that would be an encitement to commit a heinous post-baptismal sin! On the other hand, he can warn against too great reliance being put upon the fact that one has been baptised. "Do not therefore boast of thy baptism as if that were of itself sufficient for thy salvation." (*In Evang. Ioann.* VI 18). But that passage comes in the course of a vehemently anti-Donatist argument. Even where controversy is not apparent (*In Ioann. Epist.* V 6) he can say that, great sacrament though it be, divine holy ineffable regenerating making a man a new creature by washing away his past sins, baptism is but an external *character* set upon a man, who cannot therefore say: I am born of God, if he have not charity.

5. The newly baptised *Infantes* who are addressed in so many sermons and for whose Christian life Augustine is so deeply concerned no doubt varied considerably in age but were certainly not *parvuli*. Nowhere in the Sermons or elsewhere, I think, does Augustine make a direct propaganda in favour of infant baptism, or urge parents to have their children baptised. He does commend the piety of those who do, and exhorts those "who are *seniores* to be guardians of these infants lest you be *seniores* in vain." (*Serm.* 155:4.) The references to infant baptism seem all to occur in sermons preached against Pelagianism. It is surprising how little he has to say about the appropriate Christian nurture and admonition of baptised babes. They

are of course to be classed as *fideles* and admitted to the Lord's Table! But I have noted only one brief passing reference to their "nurture in piety," until they attain the use of reason. Nevertheless he holds that infant baptism is an ancient rule, an established and salutary custom of the Church, even an Apostolic tradition. To be sure it is not so clearly prescribed as to preclude all cavil, nor was it anything like general practice though no doubt common, resorted to, we may suppose, whenever an infant's life seemed to be in danger. Clearly the practice of infant baptism raised many problems and still required theological grounding. *Consuetudo tamen matris ecclesiae in baptisandis parvulis nequaquam spernenda est, neque ullo modo superflua deputanda, nec omnino credenda nisi apostolica esset traditio.* (*DE Gen. ad Lit.* X:39.)

C

Before we come to the controversial writings we may consider Augustine's answers to two posers on infant baptism sent to him by a brother bishop, Boniface, who asked for brief answers based not on the custom of the Church (presumably well known) but on reason! Augustine takes this in good part as from one busy bishop to another though he does point out the absurdity of asking for brief answers to questions of great difficulty. He essays the task nonetheless. (*Epist.* 98.)

The first question is twofold. (a) Do parents who have had their infants baptised harm them if subsequently they resort to pagan sacrifices in an attempt to have them physically healed? That this was not a purely academic question appears from Augustine's reply. The answer is No. The infant derives original sin from his parents, but the guilt is completely removed by baptism. He has no responsibility for his parents' sins, but only for his own. The sin of the parents in sacrificing to demons is of course very serious and may properly be called infanticide, the attempted murder of the infant's soul, though in fact it does not actually harm him. That being so, (b) how does the faith of the parents help children when they are baptised seeing that their infidelity does not harm them? Augustine declares repeatedly in his sermons that the faith of the parents or sponsors helps the child who is being baptised. (*Fide parentum purgantur. Serm.* 294:17. "For the remission of original sin the faith of those by whom children are offered is of advantage to them, so that by the interrogation and response of others they are purged of

whatever sinful stains they have contracted through others, i.e., those of whom they were born." *Serm.* 351:2.) Here he refines. We are not regenerated by the will or the faith of others, but "by water and the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the regenerating agent. Even when parents bring their children to baptism with the wrong intention, e.g., to restore or secure their temporal health, that makes no difference to the effect of the sacrament. Children are offered for baptism not by those who happen to carry them but *ab universa societate sanctorum atque fidelium.* They need not be brought by their parents — sometimes nuns bring foundlings for baptism. The interesting thought that the whole Church is responsible would bear further development.

The second question, Augustine feels, is even more difficult to answer. When a child is brought for baptism, the parent or sponsor is asked Does he believe in God? How can he answer He does, when clearly the child does not know what believing means or whether God exists? The reply is subtle. We say "tomorrow is the day of the Lord's Passion," though of course the Passion took place long ago. Better still, we say "This is the Lord's Body" when we are speaking of the bread which is the sacrament of the Lord's Body. *Ita sacramentum fidei fides est.*

This must seem unconvincing to us, though it is less disingenuous than it sounds. Augustine is fond of making the distinction between *signum* and *res,* but not in the sense of complete separation. A sign signifies a reality which is really present albeit in veiled form. Here *Sacramentum* is a sign implying the presence of the reality of which it is the sign, viz., faith. Paul, e.g., says that in baptism we *are* buried with Christ, not that baptism *signifies* that burial merely. In any case the Church has always taught that the sacrament of faith makes the infant *fidelis.* It will avail to save him should he die before reaching the age of reason. Not to believe this is unbelief worse than the absence of faith in the child, who at least puts no *obex* in the way of receiving the grace of the sacrament. In the last resort Augustine has appealed to the authority of Church tradition.

Up to this point I have been considering exclusively Augustine's non-controversial writings, where the pastoral concern is dominant. It is clear, I think, that he accepted without question the traditional teaching and customary practice of the Church, and held that baptism was in principle a saving sacrament effective *ex opere operato,*

though he does not actually use that expression. But it has been maintained (e.g., by Werner Jetter, *Die Taufe beim Jungen Luther*) that for Augustine baptism, while indubitably *Heilsnotwendig*, is not by itself *Heilsgenugsam*, i.e., not in practice sufficient for salvation but requiring to be supplemented by a life of faith and charity, effective only if certain conditions are fulfilled. Indeed he says so in two passages I have quoted. Besides there is the enormous stress he lays on the religious and ethical life of the Christian both before and after baptism. Penitence must be a constant feature of it. Throughout his whole life the Christian is bound to pray "Forgive us our debts." Does this mean that baptism is only a starting point and that regeneration is to be distinguished from it as a life-long process whereby the "old man" is put off and the "new man" formed in us? I am not convinced that in Augustine's usage regeneration can be so distinguished from what takes place in baptism, and I imagine the process of post-baptismal sanctification was also part of the traditional teaching of the Church, properly stressed by the preacher in order to check popular misconceptions and morally dangerous conclusions. On the other hand Augustine's special predestinationist view of grace would of course work against any magical view of the sacrament. But it appears he did not worry his people much in his Sermons with the doctrine of predestination. Within the Church and in the enjoyment of its sacraments their predestination is simply assumed, however questionable it may be in theory. *Praedestinati sumus antequam essemus* (*Serm.* 158).

D

But of course baptism figures prominently in Augustine's two major controversies — the Donatist and the Pelagian — and it was in connection with these that his two special treatises on the subject were written — *De Baptismo contra Donatistas* in 7 books, and *De Meritis Peccatorum et remissione et de Baptismo Parvulorum* in 3. In these controversies he developed, clarified and defended the Catholic doctrine of Baptism.

From the moment of his ordination Augustine was confronted with the Donatist issue. Hippo was a stronghold of the schismatic Church which also embraced almost the entire population of the extensive rural areas belonging to the diocese, the scene therefore of much denominational rivalry and bitterness. The Donatists had broken away from the Great Church in 312, alleging that it had

unchurched itself by continuing to hold communion with traditors, i.e., those who had delivered up copies of the Scriptures or communion vessels during the Diocletianic persecution; and that it had since proved itself to be no true Church by supporting emperors who during the 4th century had persecuted the true Church, i.e., the Donatists. Now Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr, the highest authority in Christian Africa, had taught: Outside the Church there is no baptism. All who come to the Church from outside must be baptised notwithstanding any pretended baptism they may have received. The Donatists claimed to stand exactly where Cyprian stood. No doubt his doctrine had been over-ruled by the Council of Arles (314) but the Donatists did not accept that decision. There is only one baptism, that which is administered within the (true) Church, viz., the Donatist communion. Therefore they baptised Catholics who came over to them, repudiating the charge that this was to rebaptise them. This in Augustine's eyes was the head and front of their theological offending. Wheresoever and by whomsoever administered baptism in the name of the Trinity is Christ's baptism and not to be repeated. To accept rebaptism is to deny Christ, to exorcise His spirit already received. To insist on rebaptism is to cause men to deny Christ even as the persecutors did of old. To forbid rebaptism with savage penalties for disobedience as Christian emperors have done is to prevent persecution and to perform the duty of a God-appointed just ruler. So with passionate conviction he argues throughout the *De Baptismo* and elsewhere.

The Donatists, of course, had their answer. They did not deny that valid baptism was unrepeatable but did deny that catholic baptism was valid. They were also agreed as to what were the *certa evangelica verba sine quibus non potest baptisma consecrari.* But they held that the minister who used them must be holy and righteous, virtually an ordained minister of their own communion. Otherwise there is no baptism. Augustine argues for a view surprisingly liberal in appearance. Of course an ordained minister is normally necessary to administer baptism, though in case of necessity a layman may do so, if he has been himself baptised and knows the formula and the actions to be used. Nay a Catholic may ask baptism of a heretic or schismatic if no one else is available, possibly even of a pagan, though he will not pronounce on this without a conciliar decision. Nor will he answer the question whether a mock baptism is valid where the correct

formula is used. No doubt it is better that the minister should be just rather than unjust, but his moral character makes no difference to his act. Paul was better than Apollos, but his baptism was no better. (*Contra Cresc.* III 6.) Sometimes the prayers used by simple-minded clerics at baptisms may be liturgically very defective, may even contain unconscious vestiges of heretical ideas, but that does not invalidate the baptism. "We say that the baptism of Christ, i.e., baptism consecrated with the essential evangelical words, is everywhere the same, and is not vitiated by any kind of perversity (moral, doctrinal, liturgical) on the part of any man whatever." Baptism is Christ's, not man's. It is He in reality Who baptises through His ministers. So that baptism is in no way dependent for its validity on the faith or moral character of him who gives it or of him who receives it. (*De Bapt.* VI 47.) A doctrine not without its dangers, as witness the protest of Wycliffe.

Perhaps I should add that it is in this context that Augustine concerns himself with the phrase *unum baptisma.* He does not, it seems, anywhere expound Ephesians 4:5, but when it is quoted against him by Petilian (*Contra Petil.* II 62-3) he turns it back upon his assailant. It is the Donatists who teach two or even an infinite number of baptisms, by making baptism depend on the character of the minister. As if in revenge Augustine's tying up of baptism with the doctrine of original sin provoked Julian of Eclanum, the clever Pelagian, to speak contemptuously of *tuum baptisma.* (*Opus Imperfect. contra Jul.* I. cvi.)

The oneness and *einmaligkeit* of baptism was doubtless a universal Christian conviction due to profund religious and theological reasons not always clearly grasped or stated — a kind of divine inspiration, Augustine says. This was what characteristically differentiated Christian baptism from Jewish and pagan baptisms which were repeatable. The Donatists held this doctrine as passionately as the Catholics. If they put baptised Catholics through the same ceremonies a second time, it was because they held they had not in fact been baptised. Outside the (true) Church there is no baptism. Their theory created great difficulties for themselves in practice which Augustine constantly rubs in, pointing in glee to the Rogatist splintersect as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole position. It is this universal conviction of the oneness and *einmaligkeit* of baptism that leads him to insist that Donatist baptism is valid, not liberalism or charity towards

schismatics, not even ecclesiastical diplomacy in the interests of Church Union as has been suggested. But this does not imply any kind of recognition of the Donatist Church. Outside the Catholic Church baptism is valid, but it is inefficacious. All its benefits remain unprofitable, nay harmful unless and until the baptised is reconciled to the Catholic Church. Sins are not remitted, including, we are left to suppose, original sin. The grace received remains inoperative. Baptism in the name of the Trinity while valid does not automatically ensure the gift of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost the Spirit gave utterance in all tongues. Now the Catholic Church throughout all nations being the one Body of Christ speaks all tongues. Not to belong to its unity means to lack the power of speaking with all tongues and thereby to be without the Holy Spirit. (*Serm.* 269.2.) And yet baptism outside the Church is formally valid and potentially fruitful. One so baptised has only to return to the Church with penitence for his sin of heresy or schism and become a practising Catholic, and the grace which has been inoperative will become operative. This must seem a somewhat desperate way of maintaining the unity and once-for-all-ness of baptism and at the same time to bind it irrevocably to the Catholic Church. Or is it the extreme example of Augustine's alleged tendency to lay stress on the conditions under which baptism is effective rather than on the rite itself? In other words, a specialised form of the statement that baptism does not save a man who has not charity? Augustine does indeed maintain that it is the possession of charity that distinguishes the Catholic from the schismatic, charity which is not severe in judging the faults of other Christians, and which seeks the salvation of all men including schismatics even to the point of "compelling them to come in." In the Donatist controversy he tends too simply to identify charity with membership of the Catholic Church.

E

Another aspect of baptismal doctrine was brought into prominence in the Pelagian controversy, though neither baptism in general nor infant baptism in particular was the primary matter of dispute. Pelagius declared "We hold one baptism to be celebrated with the same sacramental words in the case of infants as of adults"; and his outspoken disciple Caelestius asserted again and again that he had always believed that infants ought to be baptised. But if, as they both taught, infants were at birth innocent as Adam when he was created, and if baptism is *in*

remissionem peccatorum, why are they baptised who have no sins to be remitted? Is not baptism then an empty form — superfluous? The Pelagians used every possible argument to avoid the conclusion that the practice of infant baptism implies the doctrine of transmitted original sin, which doctrine Augustine was primarily concerned to defend. He entered the controversy in 412 and for the rest of his life pressed his opponents on this point. The classical treatment of the question is in his *De Meritis Peccatorum* and its pendant *De Baptismo Parvulorum.* But inasmuch as the question was one of urgent pastoral concern it forms the subject also of many sermons, to one of which (*Serm.* 294) preached on a great occasion in Carthage in 413 we may now turn.

Augustine begins by defining the scope of the controversy. All are agreed that infants ought to be baptised; the question is why ought they? Not, say the Pelagians, because they have sins to be forgiven and require baptism in order to be saved, but in order that they may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This they say on the authority of the Dominical word: Except a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Jn 3.5). Augustine has no difficulty in showing that the distinction between salvation or eternal life and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is purely arbitrary, and tries to get over the difficulty of teaching the damnation of unbaptised infants. But in the same chapter we read (Jn. 3:13) that Christ alone ascended into Heaven but with Him are all the regenerate, i.e., His members, those who believe on Him. All others are damned. There is no intermediate place. But are infants believers? Those who bring them to baptism are asked: Does he believe in Jesus Christ? and it is answered in the affirmative "on behalf of one who cannot speak but who weeps and by weeping in a sense prays for help." By the ancient canonical and well-established custom of the Church baptised infants are called *fideles,* not catechumens. To deny them this status is to be a heretic. Therefore the infant is reborn in baptism, delivered from sin (which must be original sin) and so saved. Ah but, it is urged, sin comes from following Adam's bad example. Then righteousness would come from following Abel's good example. Why is Christ needed for salvation if not because in Adam generation is damned, in Christ regeneration is sought?

Frequently Augustine assumes a pathetic note. Does the infant need a deliverer? Clearly. Witness the pious

mother running with her child to Church to have him baptised. Witness Mother Church receiving the child to be cleansed and sending him away to be nurtured in piety. . . . The child's weeping is testimony to his sin and misery. Recognise his misery and bring him help. Let us speak more compassionately for children who cannot speak for themselves . . . for them the Lord became a child, and children were the first to be slain for Him. (*Serm.* 293.10.) If the Pelagians are right and infants are sinless, one ought to say when they are brought for baptism: Take them away. They that are whole have no need of the physician. So that in effect Pelagians prevent little children from coming to Jesus their Saviour. Augustine indeed says that if a parent or sponsor who did not hold the doctrine of original sin brought to him an infant for baptism he would refuse to administer the sacrament. "For my own part, if I thought that his opinions were opposed to this faith, I could not permit him to bring the infant to the sacraments." In that case baptism would be a mere formality and a mockery, if there were but the sound and semblance of something being done, and no remission of sins actually ensue. (*De Merit. Peccat.* I.63.) The doctrine that unbaptised infants, as inheritors of Adam's sin and its penalty, are eternally damned seemed to Pelagius to be unutterably harsh, but when questioned he could only say he did not know what became of them except that they did not go to hell! Augustine too on occasion can feel the harshness and seek to mitigate it by the concession that they will suffer eternal punishment but in its mildest form! But he cannot abandon the rigour of the doctrine even when faced with admittedly hard cases. "Two infants are born . . . why does its mother bring one to grace while the other is suffocated by its mother in her sleep?" To such a question his only answer is an appeal to the depth of the inscrutable knowledge and wisdom of God. (*Serm.* 26:18.) Such teaching must have tended to universalise infant baptism, especially when ecclesiastically controlled penance came to be believed adequate to deal with post-baptismal sin.

As Augustine's last word on baptism, let me briefly summarise *Enchiridion* XLI-LV. By His incarnation and especially by His death and Resurrection in the flesh — sinless flesh but in the likeness of sinful flesh — Christ has shown in a manner *(quodam modo)* what it is to die to sin and live again unto righteousness (Rom. 8:3, 2 Cor. 5:20-21) "This is what takes place in the great sacrament

of baptism which is celebrated in our persons *(in nobis)*. All whosoever attain to that grace die to sin as He is said to have died to sin *quodam modo*, and live again by being reborn at the font as He rose again from the tomb." The age of the person baptised makes no difference. From the new-born babe to the decrepit old man, none is to be excluded from baptism. Equally there is none who does not in baptism die to sin — infants to original sin only, those more advanced in years both to original sin and to all the other sins which by evil lives they have added to that which they derived from natural generation. Augustine rejects the distinction which moderns have found helpful between "sin" and "sins." The traditional terminology makes no such distinction. Infants are said to be baptised "for the remission of sins" though they have none but original sin, and adults are said to "die to sin" though obviously they have committed many sins. The first sin of Adam may be shown to be a multiplicity of sins, disobedience, pride and the like. The Second Commandment suggests that infants inherit also the sins of their parents and even of their more remote progenitors, so that the human race tends to get worse and worse. These later sins however are less serious and can be purged by penitence. It was the first sin alone that so corrupted human nature that it required regeneration through a mediator who himself had no need of regeneration. Quoting Rom. 6:2-8 Augustine declares that baptism — that *grande mysterium* — is nothing less than the likeness of Christ's death on the Cross, which in turn is the likeness of the remission of sins. But "likeness" does not imply docetism. As Christ's death was real *(vera)* so is our remission, and as His resurrection was real so is our justification and our new life of righteousness. As His ascension was real so is our life really hid with Christ in God. All who are baptised, therefore, whether infants or adults, are to consider themselves, as Paul says, as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

It was the Pelagian controversy that brought Augustine to utter his profoundest thought about baptism. It incorporates the baptised into the Body of Christ, the Church, the company of believers. It sacramentally signifies and thereby in a real sense *is* their death to sin and their rising again to newness of life: in a word regeneration *by* the grace of God through the sacrament into the Body of Christ.

J. H. S. BURLEIGH.

Christology and Revelation*

THESIS: *In virtue of being the Son of the Father, Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to the Christian believer.*

While it is true that there is no concept in present-day theology more discussed than that of revelation, it is equally true that there is none which is more loosely used and less accurately analysed. This fact constitutes an interesting point of comparison between contemporary controversy and that of other ages of the church's history, when the bases of disagreement were almost invariably traced to their definitional sources. In the present situation there has been more concern shown in establishing whether this or that theophany should qualify for the title of revelation than in making clear what exactly is involved in the concept itself. The most that we ever have from the majority of participants in the controversy are odd sentences which, while illuminating in their brilliance, are but flashlight in their permanence, leaving us all slightly blinded as the writers hurry on to examine the single or several examples of revelation. In putting in a plea for a fresh analysis of the concept of revelation we are not of course asking that such an analysis be conducted within the limits of an anti-theological metaphysic, or without regard to revelation as that concept is known to us who have read of His dealings with men in the Old and New Testaments. Nor are we necessarily suggesting that we can give a satisfactory logical analysis of this concept which will cover the theophanies of all the religions of the world; we shall suspect that such a highest common factor is logically unobtainable; or, if it were obtainable, would do grave injustice to the specifically Hebraic and Christian concepts. The analysis then to which we shall now turn will take cognisance primarily of the revelation of the God of the Old and New Testaments.

1. Perhaps the analysis may first begin from a study of the instances of the word "revelation" or its equivalents as used in Scripture.

In the O.T. the Hebrew word "galah," to reveal, appears frequently, e.g., 1 Sam. 3:21 "The Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord." Isa. 40:5, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it." Isa. 53:1, "To whom is the arm of the

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Lord revealed?" Dan. 2:19-47, God is spoken of frequently as revealing secrets.

We have to take account also of certain other words whose content is strictly identical with that of revealing. For example: "Yada," to make known. Ps. 77:14, "Thou hast declared thy strength among the people." "Nagad," to put before one. Ps. 31:9, "Shall the dust declare thy truth?" Ps. 97:6, "The heavens declare his righteousness and all the people seek his glory." Ps. 19:1b, "And the firmament sheweth his handiwork." "Koper," to tell. Ps. 19:1a, "The heavens declare the work of the Lord." "Ra-ah," to see, Ps. 60:3, "Thou hast shown thy people hard things."

To these O.T. excerpts we must of necessity add the whole series of events in the history of Israel. Beginning with the call of Abraham down to the occupation of Palestine, the exile and the return, which the Biblical historian regarded as being not only occurrences on the horizontal historical plane but as manifestations of a divine perpendicular activity, revelatory of God's will for His people at this point and that.

In the N.T. we have: "Apokalupto," to reveal. Matt. 11:27, Lk. 10:22, "And no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father and who the Father is but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." "Phaneroo," to manifest. 1 Peter 1:20, "Christ who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these latter times for us."

2. My first contention will be that while a fairly definite analysis of the concept of revelation may be given on the basis of the O.T. evidence we cannot with complete assurance adopt that analysis for the N.T.

a. The O.T. evidence yields the following formula as the pattern of revelation: "A reveals B to C."

(i) On our first encountering this formula we should say that A and C are the variable and that B is the constant; e.g., for A to arrive at concrete revelations we shall substitute the drying up of the Red Sea or the Word of the Lord, or the firmament; and for C we shall substitute Moses or Samuel or David. We should then have determinate situations in which God reveals himself to individuals at several points in history. On this first encounter we should say that revelation is a triadic relation involving the three relata, the revealer, the revealed, and the recipient of revelation; and without the three the relation will not exist at all.

(ii) On thought, however, we discover that the simplicity of the formula rather deceived us. From its triadic character we cannot depart, but doubts arise as to whether the first two terms have been accurately defined. A has to be regarded as more than A simply, in order to find a place within the formula. A in being A is more than A if it is to be regarded as being a revelation of B to C. Take, for example, the drying up of the Red Sea. This event has to be regarded not just as a natural phenomenon due to certain climatic conditions infrequently occurrent in that part of the world (though it is to be regarded as such an event first of all), but also as capable of bearing a supernatural interpretation; that is, it is relatable to other occurrents prior to it in the space-time continuum, but its significance as a bearer of revelation is not exhausted in that reference; if it were, we should have no revelation. Also the firmament may first of all be described as groups of constellations existing in equipois according to certain formulae definable by Jeans or Einstein; but when the firmament appears as a member in the formula "A reveals B to C," it does so not only *qua* groups of constellations so definable, but as an existent whose significance is not exhausted within its four walls, an existent whose dependent character is apprehended together with facts observable by naturalistic thinkers. If A were apprehended only as A, then the possibility of our formula would be ruled out *ab initio*. This point can still more easily be seen in the text, Ps. 97:6, "the heavens declare God's righteousness." If in this verse we mean the heavens only, the heavens as the astronomers see them, then they *per se* do not declare righteousness; at best they declare the validity of certain physico-mathematical laws. It is only when the heavens are viewed not just as the example of the working of such laws but in being so as the symbols of order which is valid in the ethical realm also that they may legitimately act as a value within our formula. Our first modification then of our initial formula must be to change A into xA, where x denotes the supernatural interpretation of A; if you like, the perpendicular reference which is ignored by the naturalistic thinker.

Without engaging in the fuller implications of the Thomistic theology, let us illustrate our view by means of a famous dictum of Thomas: "God is only known through His effects *(per suos effectus)*, or through the things that He has made *(per ea quae facta sunt)*" *(Summa Theol.* 1.2.ii, *Summa Contra Gen.* 1.12). Thomas would hold that

this dictum is true both of our knowledge of God through faith and of that acquired by natural reason, the former only being superior in that it has before it many more of His effects, and those more excellent. In his opinion stars and trees and flowers reveal God to us to the degree in which we apprehend them, not just as stars and trees and flowers but as effects produced by the First Cause. According to our symbolism, A denotes the stars, etc., as theist and non-theist alike would apprehend them, x denotes this relation defined when A is placed within the formula and PQ (say the effect) from being indeterminate, becomes the determinate B. x, we might say, is not a character or quality of A co-ordinate with all its other qualities; e.g., in the case of the tree, its greenness, its time for shedding leaves, its combustibility, or even its beauty; it is a shorthand statement of the fact that the tree in having all these qualities is capable of standing within a cause-effect, or Creator-creature, relationship. Or, alternatively, x in making this assertion poses a question: "What or who is the other relatum in this relationship?" And the answer is supplied when values are given to the functions in the formula "x(A) reveals B to C"; x remains an incomplete symbol (that is, a symbol for a relationship whose nature is indicated but whose two relata are not both specified) insofar as it does not specifically determine all that it symbolises. This incompletedness of x must be retained for otherwise our formula of revelation would become tautological; thus: make PQ quite specific, i.e., make PQ B and we then have some other proposition as "the trees apprehended by B as the effect of which God is the cause — i.e., x(A) — reveal God as the cause of which the trees are the effect (i.e., B) to C." B then becomes the converse of x(A) and consequently adds nothing to the content of the proposition. What has actually happened in this formulation of the proposition is that the relation of revelation originally conceived as existing between A, B and C has been taken over into A itself; that is, the apprehension of the trees as effects of which God is the cause is the very revelation which we are attempting to analyse. If then we desire to avoid this tautological proposition which in fact raises within one of its terms the very relation which it is seeking to enunciate, we must retain our assertion that x is an incomplete symbol.

(Cf. the proposition "this box is red":—this proposition may be regarded as the answer to a question or an implied question, "What is the colour of this box?" In

other words, if the proposition is genuinely synthetic and not analytic, the predicate must be regarded as contributing novelty which is not in the subject of the proposition: this box as a member of the space-time continuum apprehended by intelligent minds is coloured, but the question implied is, "What is its determinate colour?" and the full proposition supplies the answer. A similar claim, though by no means identical for the forms of the propositions are different, is made for x(A) as it appears in the formula "x(A) reveals B to C.")

Concerning this modification — i.e., of A to x(A) — let us make two comments:—

(a) First, in saying that A, in order to qualify for a place within the formula must appear as more than A, we are not thereby tacitly admitting that an unjustified interpretation has been placed upon it. On the contrary, we should assert that A is not properly understood except as x(A). The simpler symbol was used to signify that which the totality of mankind would regard as necessary for the identification (as opposed to the total description) of A, and in addition to defer to a culture which now practically equates the naturalistic description of the external world with the only description. It is also an interesting fact, though one upon which we dare not lay any over-emphasis, that certain contemporary physicists and astronomers accept x(A) as implied by A (e.g,, Jeans).

(b) Secondly, it is as x(A) that A appears in the cosmological and the teleological arguments, if not also in the ontological; for that very reason these arguments have invariably been accused as specious logic by the non- theist. The situation is in fact quite the reverse; the theist and the non-theist are equally capable of appreciating the rules of logic, their disagreement is to be traced to their differing conceptions of what exactly the terms are which appear in the premises. For example, the non-theist may think that A is one of these terms and he knows A quite empirically; he knows too that A cannot be a member in the kind of argument or proof which the theist is attempting to construct. In fact, the term which appears in the argument or proof is not A but x(A). Of course it has happened all too often that the theist himself has been deceived into thinking that he was speaking only of A when in fact he was speaking of x(A). The precise nature of these arguments or proofs will not be stated until we have discussed the modifications of B which are

demanded before its place within the formula may be adequately stated.

(iii) Just as A has been seen to be a cloak for a complexity, so B on examination appears to demand a more precise determination than the generality of our formula permits. What does x(A) reveal to C? Is it God in His essence? Is it God's mind or will or purpose? Is it one aspect of His nature? Now we would all agree with Thomas that it is not God's essence that is revealed for this essence could not be contained within one of God's effects. (Remember that we are still discussing the analysis of revelation to which the O.T. passages prompt us.) God's full essence could not be contained in that which is less than God without that essence suffering loss. It follows then that the value of "God's essence" cannot be given to the function B in our formula. We have accordingly to turn to the other alternatives suggested above. The O.T. passages show that what x(A) reveals is God's mind in regard to this matter or that; for example, His anger with the Egyptians, His condemnation of the worship of the golden calf, His will that man should live in accordance with certain moral laws, His merciful attitude to men and women who are contrite, His loving care of His people. x(A) reveals, that is, this or that fact concerning God, or this or that aspect of His will or nature, or, if we may again propose a symbolism, x(A) reveals y(B) to C, where y symbolises one aspect of God's nature, one fiat of His will. The significance of y(B) requires to be carefully attended to. First of all, recalling our analysis of x(A), we can say that y(B) answers the question which x(A) posed, that is, y(B) presents itself as the other relatum in the relationship of which x is the incomplete symbol. In the Thomistic language, God's will is revealed as the first cause, of which x(A) is the effect. Secondly the problem presents itself of stating the relation of y to B in the symbol "y(B)". Giving values to y and B the problem could be defined thus: in apprehending through x(A) the righteousness of God, does C apprehend righteousness, a general ethical quality, which he consequently attributes to God, God being known from other situations to have certain other attributes, and indeed to be existent? Or is the apprehension a synthetic one from the start, namely that of the righteousness as being the righteousness of God? The first of these alternatives is to be ruled out for two reasons:—On the one hand it is difficult to see how the consequent attribution of the ethical quality could be

made to God rather than to some other being in the universe, if as *ex hypothesi* the initial apprehension was apprehension only of a general quality. On the other hand such apprehension is in the very nature of the case impossible: ethical qualities do not exist *in vacuo* but only as the qualities of actual actions or living persons. The righteousness then which x(A) reveals is the righteousness of the action of God or of His being. When therefore we say that x(A) reveals y(B) to C we can neither hypostatise y and attempt to give it an independent existence apart from B, nor can we regard B as remaining self-contained throughout the process. B "gives himself away" through A, so that C can be quite assured that the propositions he makes in order to describe revelation are propositions concerning B and not concerning something less than B.

(a) As we promised in discussing the first modification of the formula of revelation we must now add the further comment upon the procedure of the traditional proofs of divine existence. We have already shown how differently the theist and the non-theist regard the terms of these proofs, one example being their different views of A and x(A) which while giving the same value, say, the world, are really completely different functions. We can state that the traditional proofs represent alternative restatements in logically argued form of the formula of revelation, according to the various values which may be given to x(A) and y(B). Thus, the teleological argument gives the value "a world showing an order and purpose which is not self-explanatory" to x(A) and the value "the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God" to y(B). The ethical argument supplies the value "moral agents, seeking to attain values which cannot ultimately be denied by the nature of the universe" to x(A), and the value "the sustaining of the moral order by a righteous God" to y(B). The variety of the traditional proofs denotes the value of having a general formula beneath which we may subsume them and constitutes an argument for its necessity, if we are to understand aright their uniform purpose and nature. Moreover, such a formula shows where they fail to convince others who mistake x(A) for A, and how they may make good their case not by recourse to more accurate logic, for they are already logical, but by a demonstration that A implies x(A); if such demonstration in the end of the day proves impossible, then their failure must ultimately be regarded as due to the fact that being restatements of

the formula of revelation they can never carry weight with those who deny revelation.

(iv) C, the third relation in the revelation formula, requires no obvious modification as do A and B. Certain facts concerning the part which C plays in the situation require to be noted.

(a) First of all, it should be fairly obvious from our previous analysis of the complexity of the revelation relation that C does not receive through revelation the ready-made propositions. His part in the situation is not adequately or even remotely describable as blind acceptance of isolated or unrelated theorems. The revelation, in order to be revelation, has to complete itself in him as the third and final term. In order that this should happen it has to be appropriated by him, at least understood if not completely comprehended. In other words, it has to be related to the rest of his knowledge; its contradictions of that knowledge plainly recognised if need be, though not necessarily or immediately resolved, and its significance for his general view of the world, of himself, and above all of God, thoroughly appreciated.

(b) Secondly, the part which C plays in the situation which we call revelation can be more fully brought out if we alter our original formula in the following manner:— "x(A) reveals y(B) to C" implies "C apprehends x(A) as revealing y(B)." There will then be no danger of our thinking of C as the rather passive end-term of a process which is to all intents completed by the time it reaches C. C is represented as the term for whose benefit the whole process was initiated.

(c) Thirdly, there is from time to time the suggestion made in the O.T. that C's recognition of x(A) as revealing y(B) is not due entirely to C's unaided effort but to the working of God within C in some directly immanent way. While therefore as we have said above C may remain unmodified within the formula, it does so with this corollary:—that C's apprehension is due to a paradoxical combination of intense personal activity and divine spiritual indwelling. If you insist that this corollary demands symbolic representation, it may be given thus: C/IG (C through God's indwelling grace). Our formula would then finally read "x(A) reveals y(B) to C/IG," the presence of IG within the formula and the insistence which our corollary makes upon the presence of God within the mind and heart of him who apprehends revelation may

ultimately be calculated to ensure that revelation is revelation, that the process begun in x(A) and y(B) really reaches its goal in C.

(d) Fourthly, this end is compassed in a slightly different way if we assert that revelation is self-authenticated, that when revelation actually takes place then C in virtue of the close relation between x(A) and y(B) is in no doubt about the reality of y(B); that is C apprehends that a synthetic relationship exists between x(A) and y(B), and that this apprehension leaves him in no uncertainty as to the reality of the revelation.

In all probability both grounds, i.e., (c) and (d), for the assurance that revelation should be revelation are necessary for an adequate analysis of the situation.

(v) In view of this analysis of the O.T. evidence it is difficult to concur in the Barthian judgment that there is no revelation of God apart from Jesus Christ. To adhere so rigidly to this judgment as do some Barthians is to fly in the face of the whole O.T. knowledge of God. To make the judgment at all plausible they must do one or other of two things:—

(a) On the one hand they must demonstrate that whatever revelation of God there is in the O.T. is only in virtue of being knowledge of the pre-existent Christ. This demonstration might possibly be achieved in regard to certain of the Messianic passages where trials and tribulations are rendered tolerable through promise of a Deliverer, but it is only by a dogmatic exegesis, that is, exegesis demanded by a higher dogmatic principle, that most of the situations in which Yahweh reveals Himself to his people could be made to conform to such a pattern.

(b) On the other hand they might contend that the N.T. brings us to a totally new concept of revelation for which that title must be exclusively reserved, and some other name such as "theophany" is to be employed for the situations in the O.T. where God makes Himself known to His people. In fact that contention is most probably at the back of the minds of many who make the Barthian judgement. But surely it would stultify not only the whole of our purpose in analysing the revelational situations of the O.T. which was to show not just that God was known but *how* He was known by men of the old covenant, but also the entire O.T. witness to God's nature and existence.

JOHN McINTYRE.

(To be continued)

Book Reviews

SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN MODERN THEOLOGY

By John Brown (S.C.M. Press, London), 1955, 214 pp.; 18/-.

This important book is one of the excellent S.C.M. Press "Library of Philosophy and Theology," and is by no means the least impressive of the books that have thus far been included in the series. The book is important for three sufficient reasons: it deals with a problem very close to the heart of theological discussion to-day, handles its theme with great care and competence, and throws much light on many incidental matters. It is not a book to be read easily — indeed the reviewer found it hard to believe that it was originally delivered as lectures — especially in the two chapters concerned with the thought of Kierkegaard. It is to be read and reread, for it does not so much bring the reader to a conclusion as mark out the lines along which fruitful discussion may proceed. It is a sane, sober book, true to the best traditions of Scottish Theology; yet it is certainly not dull or unimaginative.

F. Gogarten, in his *Demythologising and History*, writes from an existentialist standpoint, "A good deal of useless discussion could be avoided in theology to-day if it were recognised that a very large part of the misunderstanding and lack of understanding between the disputants arises from failure to see clearly the bearing which this subject-object pattern has on our thinking." (pp 51-2). James Brown would agree with this statement: a patient examination of the subject-object relation, a thoroughgoing re-examination of it is necessary. Yet he would maintain that the subject-object category cannot simply be transcended as Gogarten apparently wishes it to be. His last word is, "The debate on the value of the existentialist approach to truth predominantly in terms of the Subject must contiue yet a while." The book opens with a short and illuminating section on the history of the subject-object terminology, and its main burden is the examination of the use of these terms in various modern thinkers. Kierkegaard provides the natural starting point: the human Subject in faith is seen as "a living, active, self-making, self-choosing, self-renewing energy genuinely set in time, process and becoming, with its life in ethics, religion *and* knowledge vitally affected thereby." (p. 45). But Brown finds a certain lack of clarity in Kierkegaard's conception of the Object which evokes this kind of subjectivity, especially in the treatment of the relation of faith to history. Chapter IV deals with Heidegger and Existentialism, finds in Heidegger a concealed ethical concern, and has some penetrating observations to make about Bultmann's revision of theology in Existentialist terms. Chapter VI presents a superb discussion of Buber's religious thought, in which fundamental doubts are raised about the adequacy of Buber's understanding of revelation; and Chapter VII deals with Karl Barth, with whom Brown is clearly in agreement, though critically. The last chapter returns to a general discussion of the subject-object category, reasserts its value, engages in a deepgoing consideration of the relation of faith to history, and concludes that, valuable though existentialist insistence in the importance of the activity of the believing subject in faith may be, "It is a serious matter to have set aside the existence of God, for and of Himself, and not just as one pole of the religious relation of human existence." (p. 210). Throughout the book, and especially in the latter sections of the last chapter, there is much illuminating and critical treatment of the theology of Paul Tillich, which Brown appears to regard as the most impressive attempt to provide an existentialist theology which is yet "kerygmatic."

Taken as a whole, this book is truly rewarding, the work of a careful and penetrating mind, to whom we are much indebted for a level-headed treatment of matters which are all too infrequently approached in this way.

F. W. R. NICHOL.

STUDIES IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

By Martin Dibelius. Edited by Heinrich Greeven. Translated by Mary Ling — Chapter 4 by Paul Schubert. (S.C.M. Press, London), 1956, pp. ix, 228; 25/-.

This collection of lectures and essays, two of which were hitherto unpublished, first appeared in 1951 under its German title *Aufsaetze zur Apostelgeschichte*. Its fundamental aim is to show the results of applying form-critical and style-critical methods to Acts. The work draws together Dr. Dibelius' contributions to the subject from 1923 until his death (1947). Our thanks are due to the editor and translators for making available to us a volume which must become a *sine qua non* for future study of Acts.

After observing that in Acts, Luke has allowed himself "a greater depth of original composition" than in the Gospel, the opening essay attempts to classify and assess the book "as literature," analyse stylistically the principal stories, and discover their 'individual quality.' (p. 24). The outcome of this analysis is this, that "historical reliability varies in the different sections." (p. 25). One such section is discussed in the two succeeding essays, viz., the Areopagus speech. After close analysis, it is found to be a hellenistic speech about the true knowledge of God (p. 58), 'rational' in nature, and foreign to the New Testament. The thought is utterly un-Pauline; but, interestingly, it makes the speaker on the Areopagus "the precursor of the Apologists." (p. 63). Furthermore, literary reasons compel us to regard the speech as the work of Luke (p. 71), who let his 'speaker' speak in a way "acceptable to people of culture" (p. 83). It thus represents a 'symbolical,' not an 'historical' encounter between Christianity and Hellenism. A similar analysis of the Cornelius-story indicates that what was once probably a simple legend 'innocent of any deeper meaning' (p. 121) has been developed to show that it was God's will to receive the Gentiles into the Church without obligation to the Law (p. 117).

This approach has certain other implications. First, if the author dealt with his material as has been observed, it will clearly be very hard to draw distinctions between author and 'sources.' Moreover, the fact that Luke has tried to weave the events narrated into a continuous whole, taking care at the same time to make clear their meaning (p. 125), is especially clear in the speeches, this interpretative use of which Dibelius compares with that found in ancient historiography. (p. 175). However, the parallel is not complete, for—especially in the missionary speeches of Peter and Paul—the aim is "not only to narrate, but also to proclaim . . ." (p. 178). The plain fact is that, even in Acts, "Luke did not completely become an historian . . . he remained an evangelist." (p. 185).

This most fascinating book will naturally provoke criticism. In his search after literary value and meaning, it may seem that Dibelius has denuded the speeches (and other material as well) of any true historical worth. We must remember, however, that behind the stories he finds 'legends' 'not invented by Luke' (e.g., the Cornelius story), and behind

the speeches "a dependence upon older texts" (p. 166). On the other hand, it may seem altogether too convenient to explain the difficult problem of Paul's Jerusalem visits, by treating Acts 11:29-30 (Famine visit) as 'an innocent allusion' (p. 93), and claiming that Acts 15:1-29, which he identifies with that of Gal. 2; is 'literary-theological,' and "can make no claim to historical worth" (p. 100).

Apart from a few criticisms such as these, and several mistranslations (e.g., p. 44, line 1: for 'on' read 'of'; p. 82, footnote, line 14, omit 'in,' etc.), the work is an admirable one, and the translation most readable.

M. WILCOX.

NEW ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

Edited by Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (S.C.M. Press, London), 1955, pp. xii and 274; 21/-.

With one editor a Christian and the other not, this volume contains papers dealing with thinkers as far apart chronologically as Tertullian and Bultmann, by contributors as far apart geographically as Adelaide and Aberdeen. Those who have little time for the perusal of philosophical journals will be enabled, by reading this volume, to gather something of the wide front along which, in true "frontier" fashion, a significant work of apologetics is going forward.

Inevitably, with such a "mixed bag," different readers will dwell longest on different contributions. My own interest attached itself particularly to a contribution by C. B. Martin, of the University of Adelaide, in which he attempts to point out some of the "eccentricities" of the alleged "knowledge of the existence of God on the basis of direct experience of God." Describing the experience of God to an unbeliever is not analogous to describing colour to a blind man because, though he cannot have colour sensations, the blind man can (by the use of colour-detecting instruments etc.) have knowledge of colour; this can only be denied if "knowing colour" is made synonymous with "having colour sensations." On this analogy, we can only say that the believer's knowledge of God is incommunicable ("to those who have never been confronted with it, argument is useless"), if "having experience of God" is made synonymous with "having certain religious experiences"—which is to make no claim beyond the psychological. The analogy between experiencing God and experiencing the Beautiful shows again (though in a different way) that the assertion of the incommunicability of experience of God amounts to an assertion that "knowing God" means having certain sorts of emotions and feelings.

The "eccentricities" which Martin has pointed out seem to lie in the fact that "I have experience of God" is a statement more like "I experience the Beautiful" than "I see blue" or even "I seem to see blue." To indicate this is not to indicate anything which has not been indicated before; but many will be able to learn from Martin's disclosure of it. But why did he choose the term "eccentricity?" This word usually means "oddity" or, at best, "deviation from the normal," so that one is left wondering whether Martin subscribes to a view that knowledge of physical objects is the fundamental kind of knowledge. He does not say outright that the "eccentricities" spell "invalidity"; indeed he scarcely touches on the questions of the validity of the various kinds of knowledge. It is here, in my opinon, that one comes across the "frontier" between philosophy and theology most in need of attention. One may remark finally, in comment upon Martin's interesting presentation, that it is marred by some unnecessary repetition, and by a certain carelessness in composition ("check-up procedures" and "check-

ing procedures," and "a piece of blue paper" and "a blue piece of paper" are presumably the same things).

Misprints in the volume are in line 24 of page 77 ("no" for "not"), and in line 11 of page 224 ("work" for "word"), while there seems to be a superfluous "that" in line 6 of page 119).

J. F. PETER.

THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

By Cornelius Van Til (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia), 1955, pp. 436; $4.95.

Dr. Van Til is Professor of Ethics and Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. He is an ordained minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. For many years he has waged spiritual warfare upon all sorts and shades of Modernism. Arminianism and Catholicism from his professorial fort. Because of the various weapons demanded by such military action, the serious reader of this book may find Dr. Van Til's terminology 'philosophic' and heavy, and therefore a bit foreign. Much of modern theology has abandoned the science of Exegetical Theology as "old fashioned," and has streamlined itself with huge admixtures of contemporaneous philospohy. Thus, in the apologetic war against Catholicism with its Thomastic substructure and against so-called Neo-Calvinism (Barthianism) with its dialectical substructure, Dr. Van Til frequently uses modern philosophic terms. One should read this book not to sieve out some items, but with dictionary open, to learn the fundamentals of defending the faith.

Convinced that the verbally inspired scriptures are the only infallible rule for faith and practice, Van Til presents in this book "The Christian Philosophy of Reality," "The Christian Philosophy of Knowledge," "The Christian Philosophy of Behaviour," Christian Metaphysics," "Christian Epistemology," "Christian Apologetics." His primary urge is to set forth a *distinctively Biblical Method* of defending historic Christian Faith, and illustrating how he does this. When the Reformed believer defends his positon against some rival system, he must speak and act "concretely." Van Til means that what the Christian says and how he will say it must be done in a scriptural manner. Only when we have first listened to God will we really be concrete in our approach to people and to things. The Bible, and it only, tells us what the true-faith is and describes false beliefs. Van Til wants Christians not to defend their faith in a manner dictated by logical principles or by social rules, but their defence must be exercised consistently with God's description of man's heart, his nature and his inclinations. That Christians may be used of God to win their opponents over, they must be *consistent Christians*, i.e. they must have God's *whole* counsel on their lips and God's "anthropology" well in mind. Then only will they be effectively armed to serve as God's soldiers casting down all the vain imaginations of men. Who are the opponents of consistent Christianity? All who do not take seriously the full counsel of God revealed in the infallible, organically—and verbally inspired Bible. Thus Van Til finds scientific atheists, courteous modernists, fiery Arminians, logical Catholics and dialectical existentialists as his opponents, which groups Reformation Christians must convince of their errors simply by *challenging their basic presuppositions*. Each one has certain basic assumptions both negative and positive upon which his system as such rests.

This is a book to be read carefully and prayerfully.

D. C. BOUMA.

SHORTER NOTICES

Judas Iskarioth in der Geschichte de Auslegung, by Kurt Luethi (Zwingli Verlag, Zuerich, fr. 10.50). This work is an attempt to gather together into one volume the opinions of exegetes and theologians since the Reformation concerning Judas Iscariot. The scholarship is not particularly original but the presentation is. The author states his problem as follows: "Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Lord and Saviour into the hands of His enemies . . . is the great 'mysterium iniquitatis' of the New Testament. The mystery is great if we think about the man Judas, but still greater if we take seriously the biblical witness, which sees Judas as an instrument of God in His plan of salvation." The present work seeks to show how theology has come to grips with the problem of Judas in the course of its history. The method (historical exegesis), which is carefully carried out, is to classify exegetes into historically related schools of thought, and systematically present their interpretations. At the end of each section a synthesis of views on single problems is presented, the principal one being: the meaning of Judas Iscariot; the question of Judas' participation in the Last Supper; and the final accounts of Judas (with the *crux interpretum* Mt. 27:9). In this way the opinions of about 100 exegetes are assembled with full exegetical details. Luethi does not suppose that he can make the work completely objective ("We ourselves are standing in history"), and insists that the problem of Judas must be considered in relation to Christ, just as "darkness is only possible as a contrast with light." The purpose of the work is not to teach history, but to present exegetes and theologians with material for a new appraisement of Judas, and in this the author has achieved a work worthy of high praise."

R. F. Hosking.

Living and Knowing, by E. W. F. Tomlin (Faber and Faber, London, 25/-). This is an essay in "psycho-biology" or "anthropological philosophy," which follows Max Scheler and other Continental philosophers in seeking re-examination of the presuppositions of biological science, in an attempt to free it from domination by physico-chemical theories. The author described his central theme as "the identification of life and consciousness," and the general approach is indicated by the titles of the sections of the book, namely "Man," "Nature," "Consciousness," "Value" and "The Supernatural," with a theological conclusion, in which the author acknowledges a debt to Semyon Frank and Simone Weil. Mr. Tomlin's analysis of the philosophies of man contain many interesting and penetrating judgments, and will repay study. He agrees with Whitehead that "the impulse behind modern science came from the mediaeval insistence on the rationality of God," and with Augustine that "a philosophy without a theology is only half a philosophy." His theological conclusions place much emphasis on "the notion of man as a co-creator" with God, which is a very different thing from saying that man is made in the image of God. Original sin is "non-participation in the creative activity," which again is not the same as disobedience, although it may be a special case of it. A truer note is struck when the author says that "to contra-create is to engage in the pursuit of power values for egocentric instead of theocentric glory." This is indeed the nature of sin. Students of the relations between science and philosophy will certainly find this a stimulating book, but theologians will, no doubt, be exasperated by it.

J. A. Friend.

Luther, by Rudolf Thiel (Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, $5). This popular life of the reformer, translated from The German by Gustav Wiencke, is written in five sections: "The Heretic," "The Monk," "The Warrior," "The Leader" and "The Watchman.' The effect of this dramatic order will be partly offset for the ordinary reader by the unchronological arrangement of the first half of the volume. The first section deals with the period 1517-21, the second with 1507-16 (there is no survey of premonastic days) whilst the third, 1517-22 rather needlessly covers much of the ground already covered in the first. The strength of the work lies in its real insight into the "ponderous, inward and lofty faith of Luther," supported by copious relevant quotations from the Reformer's writings.

By Grace Alone, by Herman Kuiper (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, $2.50). This soteriological study consists of an exposition of the Reformed conception of the *Ordo Salutis* as "vocation involving both regeneration and mystical union, faith and conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation and glorification." The author, largely dependent on such theologians as Hodge and Bavinck, cogently contends that alike at each stage salvation is characterised by *sola gratia.* Although at times the abbreviated American English irritates (e.g. "enough said") this small volume provides a useful compendium on its important subject.

Bible Doctrine (Unit One, Books 1 and 2), by Dorothy Partington (Committee on Christian Education, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia). These workbooks for adolescents, with the discussion approach and questionaire method, with relevant literary and pictorial illustration, expound the doctrinal part of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Useful appendices are added containing teaching suggestions. The writer effectively achieves her objective which is to "encourage the children to see problems in their own lives, to develop the habit of searching the Scriptures for the answers and to relate these basic doctrines to their daily activities."

Luther's Letters of Spiritual Counsel, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (S.C.M., 30/-). Luther was above all a shepherd of souls, and, as the editor of this volume observes, between "two pastoral acts—the one that marked the beginning of the Reformation and the one that closed the Reformer's life—lay a rich lifetime of pastoral activity." This is well illustrated in this selection of letters (briefly supplemented from the table talks) written to a wide variety of contemporaries on most diverse occasions. For the Reformer spiritual counsel is always mainly concerned with faith and the Word of God from which it arises and the exercise of love in which it issues. "We are struck," to quote J. T. McNeill, by "his deep unwavering convictions, and by the unprofessional and casual way in which he applies them in the guidance of souls." This volume, which portrays Luther's outstanding gift of consolation, is of considerable value for its revelation of the mind and character of the Reformer.

Love Thy Neighbour for God's Sake, by Herman Hoeksema (Eerdmans, $2.50). In this volume, the ninth in his exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, the author's basic assumption is that as "the second table of the law is rooted and based on the first" it constitutes a rule of gratitude for the Christian rather than a basis for the life of society in general. The writer is always prepared to give strong

reasons for the positions adopted although some of these will be sharply contested (e.g., "the Christian must always obey the summons of his government to arms"). Here is fresh and vigorous, if debateable commentary, on the second part of the Decalogue.

Dean Colet and his Theology, by E. W. Hunt (S.P.C.K., London, 30/-). Here is portrayed the Christian Humanist, who, as a refomer rather than a revolutionary, was primarily concerned with the moral cleansing of the Church. Accepting the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth and its literal sense in the historical context as all important (in contrast to the fantastic character of mediaeval exegesis), Colet was nevertheless a mystic of the Platonic variety and no forerunner of the cardinal doctrines of the Reformation. An interesting chapter attempts, on the basis of the very meagre sermonic remains, to bring out the main characteristics of his preaching. The Oxford Reformer, as indicated by ample relevant quotation from his writings, anticipated *in nuce* the Broard Anglicanism of a later day.

Jesus of Yesterday and To-day, by Samuel G. Craig (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, $2.75). This volume, commencing with the chapter, "Was Jesus a Christian?", proceeds to a comprehensive exposition of the various roles filled by Jesus, terminating with the subject, "Jesus and His Place in the Cosmos." The writer, largely influenced by the theological perspectives of the late B. B. Warfield, develops his thesis with convincing clarity that Jesus is primarily the object rather than the subject of the Christian religion, "that in which it finds its center, as that on which everything terminates." This admirable volume, the mature product of on incisive mind and ripe experience, may well fill in popular contemporary apologetic the place occupied by Carnegie Simpson's classic, *The Fact of Christ,* in another generation.

Royal Priesthood, by T. F. Torrance and *The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry,* by J. K. S. Reid (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 9/- and 5/-). These booklets embody Occasional Papers, three and four respectively, of the Scottish Journal of Theology by the Joint Editors of that publication. The first, covering a wide field in ecclesiology, contends that as the ministry of the Church is correlative with the ministry of Christ, the participation of the Church in that ministry as One Body with Christ, is primarily corporate. Hence the special qualification of priesthood resulting in an ordained ministry, being within the corporate priesthood of the whole body, must be given primarily a corporate expression. This corporate episcopate in the Church is held *in solidum* by the ministry of presbyters. The second paper, which largely reflects the influence of T. W. Manson, examines the nature of the apostolate and concludes that as first witnesses the Apostles had no successors in the primary sense, and hence "the continuing ministry belongs to the Church as such." The apparent willingness of both writers to accept a constitutional episcopacy as belonging to the *plenum* of the Church would appear to most Presbyterians unduly concessive in the interests of Christian unity.

NOTICE

Owing to rising costs in the last four years it is necessary to raise the future annual subscriptions to ten shillings, which will include postage (Foreign 10/6). Single copies will be sold for three shillings (excluding postage).

R. Swanton.

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